Decisions about the sîn-pûa form of marriage are usually made by the boy's parents or grandparents when the child himself is only two or three years of age. It is therefore important to note at the outset that it is their right and duty to make this decision in terms of their own best interests and the best interests of the family. The child's own interests may be set aside as a consideration of secondary importance without any risk of social disapprobation or personal guilt. A parent may sympathize with his son if his marriage turns out to be a personally unhappy one, but he need not feel guilty because he was responsible for the decision. It was simply not his responsibility to consider the child's personal happiness in making a decision about his marriage. Children exist for the sake of their parents and for the sake of the family, not the family and the parents for the sake of their children. Although the Christian and the Chinese peasant agree that one of the primary functions of the family is to beget children, they base their conclusions on entirely different premises. The Christian must be a father for the sake of the children; the Chinese farmer must be a father because it his duty as a son. For the Christian the greater obligation always rests with the parents, while for the Chinese the greater obligation always rests with the children. They must obey and respect their parents; work for their parents' support and comfort; and eventually marry and provide descendants to insure their parents' security in the next world. So basic is this attitude to the Chinese view of family life that should a child die before his parents, his father may justly beat his coffin with a stick

593 to punish him for being so unfilial. As one of our informants in
966 Hsiachichou explained,

> " When you have a child you want him to take care of you when you are old and bury you when you die, but it is just the opposite if you have to bury him. It is because you are mad at him for failing you that you beat him."

583 What, then, are the considerations which make a family more or
183 less likely to adopt a sīm-pûa rather than marrying their son in the
554 preferred way? Certainly one of the most important is that the preferred form of marriage is by definition the proper way for a man to marry. The sīm-pûa form of marriage is not disgraceful but neither is it as right, as natural, as the preferred form. The difference between the two is analogous to the difference between speaking a language with an accent and speaking without an accent. Both will do, but one is right. The very fact that it is the right form of marriage also makes the preferred marriage the more prestigious. It is favored for the same reason that a church wedding is preferred over a civil wedding in the United States. It is the socially correct way of marrying. Moreover, like a church wedding in the United States, it gives a family an opportunity for social display and conspicious consumption. Being able to pay a large bride price, receiving an ostentatious dowry, entertaining hundreds of friends and relatives, displaying to your neighbors and fellow villagers the extent of your social ties -- all of these give a family face. One might say that the preferred marriage is better than the sīm-pûa form of marriage for the same reason that a terazzo floor is better than a simple concrete floor.

Death and Beyond

76 128 184 Death and burial have often been described for Chinese communities (Gallin, 1966:219-30; Fei, 1939:75-9; M. Yang, 1945:86-90; C. K. Yang, 1967:28-53). Although there are regional differences, significant elements are reasonably similar in Sanlei and due to limited space, the below account will not be detailed nor elaborate. Instead, remarks are restricted to particular local variations not adequately described in the literature or to those which bear directly on the problem focus of the paper. The reader is referred to the literature for more complete accounts.

764 Death ritual varies in accordance with age, sex, marital situation, the number of descendants, and the financial status of the family. In general, the greater the wealth, age, and/or number of descendants, the larger and • 766 more elaborate the ceremony. As already stated, death before reaching the first thirty days of age is not ritualized at all and the death of a child at any age is seldom accom- 761 panied by any ceremony. There is considerable resentment 562 directed against a male who lived some years but died before producing offspring for villagers claim he has cheated his parents by failing to repay their investment in him with grandchildren. There is no corresponding attitude toward the early death of females unless they have only a few siblings, none of whom are males, and in this case, the resentment is related to the fact that there were plans for an